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Companion Animal Fund

Ron Grier, D.V.M.*

The Companion Animal Fund (CAF) started by Dr. Ron Grier at Iowa State University in November of 1983 as the Pet In-Memoriam Program. Dr. Roger Krogstad (ISU '80), who practices in Marshfield, WI, had suggested to Dr. Frank Ramsey that something be established to allow veterinarians to make donations in memory of a client's pet which had died or was euthanized. In 1987, the name of the organization was changed to the Companion Animal Fund. The change was made because of an increasing number of requests by people and organizations wishing to donate in honor of someone (eg. their veterinarian) rather than as a memorial.

Dr. Ron Grier is the person to whom veterinarians write to make a donation to the CAF. The veterinarian provides Dr. Grier with the client's name, address, pet's name and species. The veterinarian then makes a donation in that client's name for his/her pet. Within 10 days, the pet owner receives a letter from Dr. Grier. This letter acknowledges that the owner's veterinarian has made a donation in memory of his/her pet.

The letters that are sent to the owners are individualized. Each letter is reviewed for accuracy and special features are added when noted by the donor. These letters are species specific. Besides letters for dogs and cats, unique letters are written for horses, birds, guinea pigs and rabbits.

The fund helps the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine Teaching Hospital purchase equipment that would otherwise be impossible to purchase. Some of the equipment purchases include; videoendoscopy machine, color doppler ultrasound, a phaecoemulsifier, electrosurgery equipment, and orthopedic equipment. These instruments allow the Teaching Hospital to provide unique services, educational opportunities, and to do clinical research.

*Dr. Grier is a Professor of Clinical Sciences in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Iowa State University.

Besides providing money, the Companion Animal Fund helps owners through the grief process and reinforces the humanistic aspect of the veterinary profession. It also enhances the image of the veterinarian and facilitates return clients.

The Companion Animal Fund is multifaceted. To make it easier for a veterinarian to send a memorial, pre-paid memorials are available. Unique prints are available which can be purchased. These prints are; "The Gentle Doctor," "Little Boy and the Lamb," and "Girl and the Animals." Donations may be in honor or memory of a pet or a person, or directed toward a specific use. The memorials can be phoned in (515-294-2531) or faxed (515-294-9281). A brochure is available for non-DVM's who want to make a donation. Pet memorials count toward becoming a Gentle Doctor (\$1000) or a sustaining member (\$5000). The funds are used immediately, as CAF is not an endowment. Bequests can also be arranged.

Sandy Popelka is in charge of day-to-day administration of the program. In 1991, 2,040 memorial letters were sent to pet owners informing them that their veterinarian, friend, or relative had made a memorial donation. In that same year, the CAF received 184 donations from DVM's and 97 pet owners. This amount totaled \$29,383.63. Each week brings a new and unique phone call, letter or heartfelt experience.

Dr. Grier receives many letters from clients whose veterinarian has sent in a memorial. A typical letter might read, "Dear Dr. Grier, Please know how much we appreciate your informing us of the donation to your College of Veterinary Medicine Companion Animal Fund in memory of Casey by the [sic] Animal Hospital. After almost 17 years of daily unqualified love, the loss has been acute for me. I don't know if people write you back to let you know that you truly understand and how beautiful your words of comfort were to me. Thank You." One client, after receiving a letter from CAF, wrote to Dear Abby about the fund.

To obtain additional information, contact:
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or call: Sandy Popelka
515-294-2531.



"Little Boy and the Lamb"